

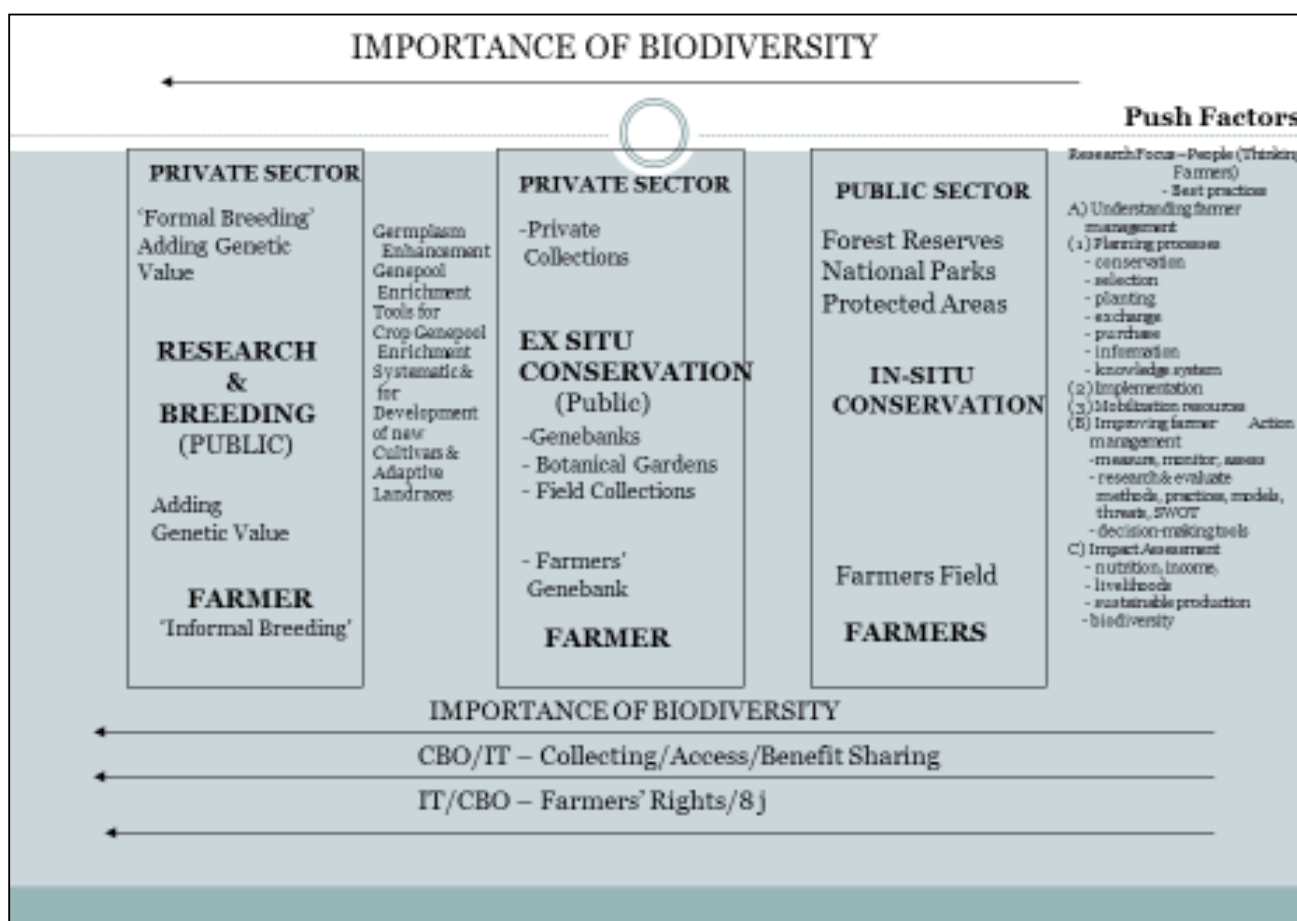
The Role of ITPGRFA in Agrobiodiversity Management: Future Strategies and Actions

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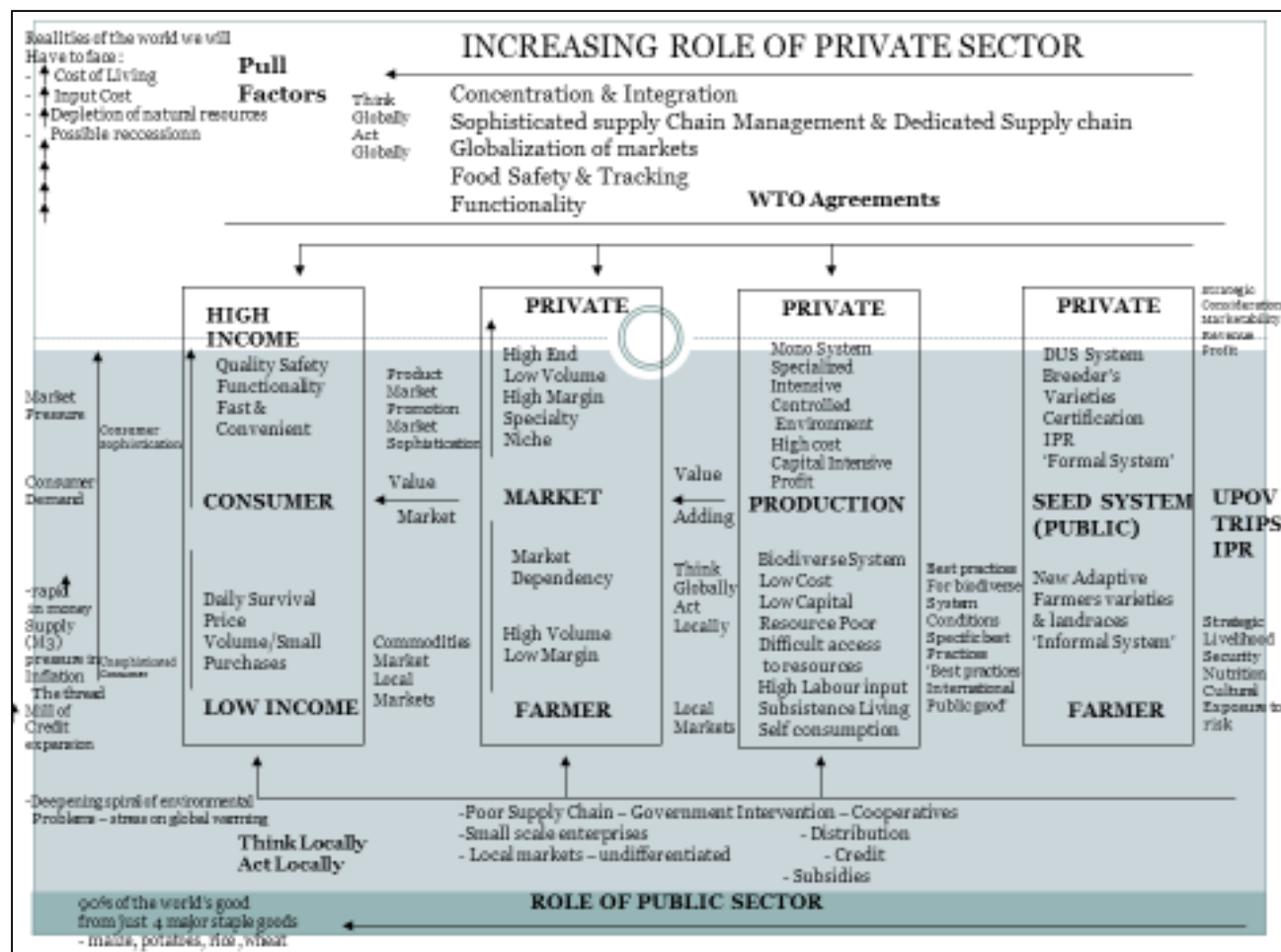
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One of the serious threats to agrobiodiversity is the standard-based modern industrial food system. The market forces of this food system linking use to conservation are pushing the approaches to agrobiodiversity management in the field. Various global efforts have been made to promote agrobiodiversity management. One such efforts is the adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) in 2004. The Treaty recognises the important role of custodian farmers in maintaining, adapting and promoting agrobiodiversity. As such, one of the strategic directions of the ITPGRFA

is the encouragement of custodian farmers to produce desired agrobiodiversity products and services at the field level. These desired products and services are those which are i) produced by farmers, ii) for the farmers, iii) for conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA, iv) for food security and v) for improved livelihoods. The ITPGRFA encourages such desired products and services through various provisions of the Treaty as well as through the Benefit Sharing Fund (BSF), in particular Article 9 of the Treaty on Farmers' Rights, Article 6 on Conservation, Article 6 on Sustainable Use, Article 13 on Benefits Sharing, and Article 18 on Funding Strategy. The



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BSF seeks to invest in high impact projects supporting farmers in developing countries conserve crop diversity in their fields and assisting farmers and breeders globally adapt crops to changing needs and demands.

So far the results on the implementation of the various provisions in the Treaty for improvement on agrobiodiversity have not been encouraging. Contracting Parties are not making an active effort to implement Farmers' Rights and other provisions of the Treaty for the improvement of agrobiodiversity. The BSF has limited funding and since 2008, 52 projects have been approved for implementation over three project cycles.

What next for the role of the Treaty in Agrobiodiversity Management? Can an alternative biodiverse-food system be developed? How can agrobiodiversity be improved through use in the food system as well as through non-use? Can agrobiodiversity be pushed through the food system? Can consumption patterns and lifestyle be

changed to pull agrobiodiversity through the food system? So far global efforts have been to push agrobiodiversity through the food system. However, market forces in the food system are pulling away from agrobiodiversity. Therefore the role of the Treaty in agrobiodiversity management is getting more challenging and difficult.

The BSF has to play a bigger and more effective role to create the demand or pull factors in improving agrobiodiversity management in food and non-food uses. Among pull factors that can be created or developed are: i) developing the supply and value chains for the biodiverse food system, ii) strengthening the local seed systems for *on-farm* management of diversity in agricultural systems, iii) improving the biodiversity-based safety net for food security and livelihoods through better understanding of the desired products and services for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning.